



**ART DECABOOTER**  
1941 - 2019

Honored as 2019 Historymaker  
President of Scottsdale Community College  
Chair of McDowell Sonoran Mountain Preserve



The following is an oral history interview with Art DeCaboooter (**AD**) conducted by Norma Jean Coulter (**NJC**) for Historical League, Inc. and video-graphed by John Blake on September 18, 2018 at the Arizona Heritage Center in Tempe, Arizona. Also present is his wife, Mary (**MD**), who assisted the interviewee with his answers.

*Original tapes are in the collection of the Arizona Heritage Center, an Arizona Historical Society Museum Library at Papago Park, Tempe, Arizona.*

**NJC** My name is Norma Jean Coulter. It's September the 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018, and I am interviewing Dr. Arthur DeCaboooter, a past president of Scottsdale Community College and we are at the Arizona Heritage Center in Tempe. You've been such an important part of the growth of Scottsdale Community College as well as Scottsdale itself, that it's kind of difficult to do a retrospective of all of your activities because you seem to have the ability to draw in the community, wherever you've been. So, I would like to explore your background to understand what influences shaped these leadership abilities.

**AD** Good luck.

**NJC** I understand you were born in Omaha.

**AD** Yeah.

**NJC** Tell me about your childhood. Was it typically Midwestern?

**AD** It was typical Midwest. My family was all involved with the slaughterhouse business.

**MD** Meatpacking.

**AD** ...and meatpacking. And that was something that I figured I'd be doing all my life. As a matter of fact, during the summer of college, I worked at the slaughterhouse and had all that great experience. But Omaha was where the slaughterhouse was located, and I didn't dream that I'd ever be moving from Omaha. I was there in the slaughterhouses. That's what we did.

But things changed. I received a scholarship to boarding school in Oklahoma. I went for two years to Oklahoma, two years in Minnesota, three years at Notre Dame, and a summer at Indiana University. So, I've always been very active education wise.

Also, during that time I was involved with education at many levels of the Catholic Church. I started with the elementary school and the school board, then I went for 30 years on the board at Xavier College Prep. I was active at the national level with the National Catholic Education Association, involved with the latter as a vice chair. I was ineligible to be chair because you had to be a bishop to be a chair. And that didn't happen.

**NJC** Well I'd like to go back and explore some more about your early life to see what led you to doing all these things. Did you have brothers and sisters?

**AD** Oh yeah, two brothers and two sisters. And we were very close. They got me involved in more education.

**NJC** What type of things did you do with your family early on?

**AD** When we were little, we had a place on the river. We'd do boating. We'd do fishing. Not much hunting, but recreation types, barbecues and things. They were done as a family and a lot with my grandparents, too.

**MD** They used to go to Rose's Lodge for chicken dinners

**NJC** I assume that you were active also in the church when you were young?

**AD** Yes, I was an altar boy. As a matter of fact, during my seventh grade and eighth grade I was at Church of the Magdalen in Wichita, Kansas, the largest parish in Kansas but it was a small school. There were only 13 in my graduating class. I was the custodian for the school full time as well as being a student in the seventh and eighth grades. I'd get there an hour and some before school and a couple hours after school. I think I made 55 cents an hour. Mr. Murray, the principal, went to politic with the pastor and he got it raised 15 cents. It was very interesting.

*Art DeCabooter Historymakers Oral History Transcript*

**NJC** When you finished elementary school, is that when you went to boarding school?

**AD** Yes, for high school.

**NJC** Did you want to do that? Or did the scholarship just come to you?

**AD** I wanted to do that. And there were several people from the Wichita down at St. Gregory's in Shawnee, Oklahoma. And I was on scholastic aid. It was a minor seminary for people who were studying to be a priest, so it was something I wanted to do. It was not something I was forced to do.

**NJC** And when you went to St. Gregory's, was that an all-boys school?

**AD** Yes.

**NJC** And at that time were you thinking about becoming a priest?

**AD.** Yes

**NJC** Where was it located?

**AD** Shawnee, Oklahoma.

**NJC.** So, you went away from home for the first time?

**AD** Right, to boarding school.

**MD** He went to that school where you were either gonna be a thug or a criminal, or you were gonna be a priest. It's kind of a school where people send problem children. And then kids who were saintlier, hopefully.

**NJC** Oh, and you were supposed to influence the thugs?

**AD** Not necessarily.

**MD.** He set off a cherry bomb underneath the main altar and he short-sheeted beds.

**AD** There's some interesting things we did at the boarding school. After that I had two years of

*From Art DeCabooter 2018 Video Interview*

*Art DeCabooter Historymakers Oral History Transcript*

theology at St. John's University in Minnesota; then went from there back to St. Gregory's for theology. I was ordained after that.

**NJC** And you were ordained?

**AD** I was a Benedictine monk.

**NJC** Your career path then was to be in the church?

**AD** Right.

**NJC** But then you went on to Notre Dame?

**AD** I was at Notre Dame for summer school for an MBA program.

**NJC** For an MBA program?

**AD** Mainly I was at Notre to minor in it.

**MD** He had wanted to be the business manager at St. Gregory's. St. John's was a university to finish college.

**NJC** And while you were at St. Gregory's, you also worked as a Dean of Students?

**AD** Yeah, I was the Dean of Students. I spent a lot of time with that because we had some challenging students. And there was one night that our women, (they went coed after a while) raided the men's side of the campus singing Christmas songs. Then the word was out that they were going to run through the men's dorm and cause a lot of trouble. I found out about that because I had been there, so I knew it was going to happen. I kept the police from coming on campus. Kept their guard dogs called off, because there was going to be a big fight. And it was me here and 200 guys there. And I said, "You have no option. You come one step further and you're expelled." And they knew I would do that because I had expelled a couple of women the day before. So, we got by that crisis. But again, it was because of the background I had at the other universities.

**NJC** So, that was a good thing. And after St. Gregory's, you went to Indiana?

**AD** Yes, I was a Dean of Students at St. Gregory's and then went to Indiana University for a doctorate degree.

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**NJC** And your doctorate was going to be in?

**AD** Higher ed.

**NJC** In higher education? At that point, had you decided to stay in the education field?

**AD** Yes, but I believed I had more of an impact as a person active in the field than doing things theoretically, for example.

**NJC** That's how you would have a better influence on students and so forth. And you received your Doctor of Education degree there?

**AD** Yeah, at Indiana University.

**NJC** Was that also in administration?

**AD** Yes. As a matter of fact, the real emphasis in moving me to be Dean of Students was because I had a lot of experience in the community.

**NJC** What drew you to Mary? What was the quality she had that caught your eye?

**MD** A friend of his asked him to go to a surprise birthday party.

**NJC** What about her made you interested?

**AD** Oh, her sense of humor.

**NJC** She had a good sense of humor?

**AD** Oh yeah, a good sense of humor and very supportive. I have Parkinson's and that just illustrates more how much she does for me, for the past 13 years that I've had it.

**NJC** So, did you get married while you were at Indiana?

**AD** We got married in Indianapolis.

**NJC** In Indianapolis? On this note, I notice that each of these places you went has honored you as an outstanding alumnus. So even as a young man, your outstanding leadership skills were noticed.

**AD** Yeah, people were very generous.

**NJC** Your first professional position was at Black Hawk College in Kewanee, Illinois?

*From Art DeCabooter 2018 Video Interview*

**AD** No, my first professional one was Dean of Students at St Gregory's.

**NJC** I meant after graduation.

**AD** Yeah, I was Dean of Students at St. Gregory's.

**MD** No, after you graduated from Indiana University with your doctorate, your first job was at Blackhawk in Kewanee, Illinois. You were Dean of Student Personnel.

**AD** Yeah, right.

**NJC** Why did you why did you pick a small school like that?

**AD** At the beginning, it was personnel management program in higher ed. That was where the steppingstones began.

**MD** It was a perfect assignment. They used his job description at Indiana University. His doctoral chair used it because he was the Dean of Admissions in charge of financial aid. He did everything and it was like a perfect spot to show what you could do in a small campus. He did it all.

**NJC** And at that point, you could be very influential with students if you were at a small campus.

**AD** Right, but I would do other things.

**NJC** And you set up lots of different programs there?

**AD** Yeah.

**NJC** Agriculture? Automotive? Was it like a training school?

**AD** We had technical programs. The real emphasis was job preparation.

**NJC** Was it all technical?

**AD** No, there was nursing and equine science. There were also career programs and articulation with the universities preparing students to transfer.

**NJC** I noticed that in 2017, you were inducted into their Blackhawk College Wall of Fame?

**AD** Right.

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**NJC** That was quite an honor.

**AD** It was, yes.

**NJC** You helped create a permanent campus there?

**AD** Initially there were four temporary buildings there. Part of my work was to move along with accreditation and to have full time faculty as well as personnel.

**NJC** I believe there's a quote that you jump started careers of many young people

**AD** That's what they say. And it's true.

**NJC** It's true about your legacy at Black Hawk?

**AD** Yes.

**MD** He started the Whole Hog Barbecue.

**NJC** Tell us about the barbecue.

**AD** The college was located in Kewanee, Illinois—the hog capital of the world. So, that was something that I couldn't pass up.

**MD** Someone donated the big hog, the one at the fair. Since it was donated to Black Hawk Art, a group of people had the first whole hog barbecue to do fundraising.

**NJC** I'll bet that was successful.

**AD** It was.

**NJC** Now, you went from Black Hawk College to Scottsdale Community College?

**AD** Right.

**NJC** That was a great big jump because I understand you were the only out of town applicant for Scottsdale Community College position?

**MD** I don't think so. There were 274 applicants. I think they were from all over, for Scottsdale.

**NJC** But when you came to Scottsdale Community College, that was a big adjustment.

*From Art DeCabooter 2018 Video Interview*

**MD** He's the first person outside of Maricopa County to be hired as president of one of the community colleges. That's probably what that meant.

**NJC** That was what I was trying to get at. Were you anxious to come to the southwest? Were you ready to leave the Midwest?

**AD** Yes, my parents had moved out here some years ago. My dad was with Cudahy Packing Company for 45 years and he was out here at their main office so that was somewhat of an impetus, but also the job. I mean, how do you go from a school with 800 to a thousand students to five or six thousand? And that transition really happened because of the quality of the faculty and staff that we had.

**NJC** That was already at Scottsdale?

**AD** That I recruited. I would say part of my legacy at the college was to hire the brightest and the best and let them go for it. And they responded. Innovative classes, interactive classes, dual enrollment, any number of things.

**NJC** When you came to Scottsdale Community College, you came right after a lot of student unrest.

**AD** Right.

**NJC** Over what they seemed to think was the prominence of athletics. So, your humor was tested when you discovered that the mascot was the artichoke?

**AD.** It was a real push.

**MD** The students came to see you. One was the student body president, Betsy Bombeck.

**AD** Yeah, the student body president was Betsy Bombeck. She, along with some of her cohorts, other students, came to my office and challenged me almost, saying, "Well you're here now, what are you going to do about the mascot?" And I said, "Oh, the armadillo? That's fine." They said, "No, no, no. It's an artichoke." I said, "Whatever." So, we developed a relationship also with Castroville, California.

**NJC** Do they grow artichokes in Castroville?

**AD** Oh yeah, it's the artichoke capital.

**MD** And they did PR back and forth.



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**NJC** So you had kind of a sister city in Castroville with the artichokes?

**AD** We'd send students there.

**MD** You made lemonade out of lemons when people were upset.

**AD** Yeah.

**MD** That's good.

**AD** And we didn't cave in. We just pushed forward. I was on Chicago radio stations, people across the country calling in about the artichoke.

**NJC** About the artichoke?

**AD** Yeah.

**NJC** What was your first reaction to it?

**AD** I was wondering what the hell was going on. Who's in charge? But there was nothing for us to do because of the student unrest at that time. I was very involved with the students. To emphasize it more, I went to many of the programs running initiatives on campus. It was a challenge when I first got there because there were some very serious things going on.

**NJC** Were you proud to be called the head artichoke?

**AD** Yeah. That's my claim to fame. And that's why I was hired.

**MD** Do you think you did a good job?

**AD** I was hired because that's the Art in the A in the artichoke.

**NJC** There have been many innovative programs that were previously started or initiated when you arrived there, and I wanted to ask you about some of them. Free tuition for Salt River Indian Reservation students. Was that your initiative?

**AD** It was, yes. But, I mean, it took a long year to get there. When I went to Scottsdale, it was on the reservation, Salt River Reservation. We were leasing 160 acres and it was touchy. If you go out there, it's just overwhelmed with buildings and pavilions and casinos and things. Back then, no one was really involved with negotiating with the Indian Communities like me. And we had all sorts of meetings and it went on and on. And finally, part of the resolution was agreed to on principles, was that people from the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community could come to

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the college and not be charged tuition. And so that helped with the transition. But there were still people who didn't want anything on the reservation.

**NJC** You mean people in the Scottsdale community didn't want them?

**AD** No, it was mainly the tribe didn't want them. We had initiatives with that on two or three occasions, but the students really didn't get involved at that point. It was mainly the board negotiating.

**AD** The students negotiated space for people from the Salt River Community to be on campus without tuition. I'm trying to think, it was probably five years after I arrived, and we moved step by step. But we also had things with the deforestation of the lower Salt River.

**MD** Pesticides.

**AD** The pesticides. And that caused a problem because they would drift over into the housing in Scottsdale. And people became very ill. I couldn't be part of that because I was diagnosed with the Parkinson's and one initiative of Parkinson's, where it is a problem, is the pesticides.

**MD** You were on the pesticide board.

**AD** The governor came out one time and was trying to quell the faculty, apparently because people were really upset. Governor Babbitt arrived there a little early. He came to my office and I said, "You need to defuse these people; there are hysterical people there."

**NJC** Defuse it - oh, defuse the crowds.

**AD** Hysterical people. And I said to him, "You need to walk in and wear this." I gave him a mask that I picked up one time when we had one of our babies and I took it as a souvenir. When he went out there, he put the mask on, and they really cheered. Then we got serious about it. And the next day, I got a call from his office saying, "The governor would like to appoint you to the pesticide board." And I said, "I don't know enough about pesticides. Get someone that knows something about it, but I will help." They said, "No, the governor wants you to do that and he's making the appointment today." And he did that. I don't know how many years, but for several years I did that. And again, I was the vice chair of the pesticide board because their bylaws stipulated that they could not have anybody involved in farming or pesticides as chair of the board. I was vice-chair and ran most of the meetings. But it was a good learning experience.

**NJC** Were you successful in getting the pesticide problem solved?

**AD** No, I'm not sure it was ever solved, but we really lowered it. We put in the amount of spray that should be in a plane. Also, what time of day you could apply it and any number of activities like

that.

**MD** And this is because of the cotton fields that surrounded the college.

**AD** Yeah.

**NJC** I remember this. Another thing that you did that was quite an accomplishment was to get the accreditation for the school.

**AD** Right. That was one of the major things that I accomplished.

**NJC** It was accredited when you got there?

**AD** They were just beginning their accreditation process, which involves writing a base self-study and having a series of meetings. We started that. And I was chair of that. Over the years, I have chaired or been involved in twenty-five accreditation visits across the country. You learn a tremendous amount doing that.

**NJC** I can imagine.

**AD** But you also received feedback that encouraged you to do more. There was always something new to be found. Because as an administrator, I looked for good ideas from other people too. And I'd learn a lot. The Indian community was very supportive of that.

**NJC** Were all the other Maricopa colleges at that time accredited?

**AD** Glendale, Mesa, Phoenix, Scottsdale, and Maricopa Tech were already accredited. But it's for a specific amount of time - four years or five years.

**NJC** So you had to redo it every so many years?

**AD** Right, we'd work together on those efforts. It was never in isolation.

**NJC** Just like you had at Kewanee.

**AD** Yeah, we had any number of people involved in our Performing Arts program. It's totally dependent upon full time faculty and part time with articulation, which was critical dealing with the, universities to accept student credit. As a matter of fact, President Crow from ASU was on campus. We were involved in a retreat of people just recently, and he really focused on articulation and initiative. Through this program, graduates could apply to ASU as juniors. We are proud of the dual enrollment program. Students can qualify at any of the Maricopa community colleges in the state. They have to do certain things ...

**NJC** That's an amazing accomplishment.

**AD** Yeah, it is. And that continues.

**NJC** And you had some from the reservation doing that also?

**AD** Yeah, we had a special cohort for them. The dual enrollment is probably one of the things that I'm proud of because of what can be. For every student that takes a three-hour course at Scottsdale compared to the cost at ASU - would save probably \$100 and that adds up after a while.

**NJC** I can imagine. I understand too, that while you were there that the Fine Arts program was able to take a program all the way to the Kennedy Center. How did that happen?

**MD** Pam Fields.

**AD** Oh yeah Pam Fields and the quality of the faculty. This was through a competitive process that you go through at local, regional, and national levels.

**NJC** You were the first college to ever present something at Kennedy Center?

**AD** Right. It was tremendous. We went back for it. It was very good.

**NJC** Do you remember what play it was?

**AD** It wasn't Brigadoon. I don't recall. But it was too good.

**NJC** Besides fine arts, you were also interested in getting Scottsdale Community College interested in sports. How did you manage to get the Valley of the Sun Bowl?

**AD** The Valley of the Sun Bowl would select one of our local teams through a competitive process to be the team that was going to play nationally. And the real encouragement there was the number of All-American students that we had in golf, tennis, cross country, softball, baseball, basketball, soccer, football.

**NJC** So you had a well-rounded sports program?

**AD** Gymnastics. It was tremendous and that brings in the students also as well as fun and everything.

**NJC** Were there any sports that came in while you were there that they hadn't had before?

**MD** Soccer.

**AD** Soccer and golf, too. Our golf team has won the national championship three times.

**AD** And I'm trying to think...

**NJC** Girls volleyball?

**AD** No, we had that.

**MD** They had that from the beginning.

**NJC** But I understand they got some national recognition?

**AD** Oh yeah, they did very well. They were in Baltimore at the community college tournament there. As a matter of fact, when I was at St. Gregory's during the summertime, I was in charge of a summer recreation program. And it ultimately ended up that students in high school would come through a process, to the college.

**AD** At St. Gregory's. And we had people like Al Rosen from the Giant's co-sponsor.

**NJC** Oh really?

**AD** We had people from other colleges come and it was a competitive process. But the thing that was really encouraging was the quality of education these students received. Al Rosen was there from the Yankees.

I coordinated the Colt World Series effort. It ended up being a national competition in Hagerstown, Maryland, and I was head of all that. They came to me and they said they needed someone to be in their parade. Would I come back and be their, what do you call it in a parade?

**NJC** Grand Marshal?

**AD** Yeah. Grand Marshal. I went back there, and it was fun. They needed a hero, so I got to be the hero.

**NJC** Another program that I understand you helped develop was the ESL Hospitality Program. Can you tell me about?

**MD** It was two different programs.

**AD** Yeah, two different programs. The main one was our culinary arts program.

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**MD** And then hospitality. This program was created in response to the building of casinos and hotels on the reservations. Staff in these enterprises had to be a certain percentage of Native Americans.

**AD** And hospitality tied into that. And again, we went out to hire the best and the brightest to be involved in the development of that program. And it has done very well. Matter of fact, one of our son's three or four degrees is from culinary arts.

**NJC** And I understand it received some national recognition?

**AD** Oh yeah. When they go to a national competition, they are always a team there. Otherwise they're always individuals.

**NJC** And this hospitality program, was it preparing them for work in the hotel industry?

**AD** Yeah, both.

**MD** Through NAU.

**AD** We were working in cooperation with NAU, also. But it would be courses in preparation, as well as front office and things they do, management and all that.

**NJC** Was there a food aspect with it, too, for catering and...

**AD** Right. They did cater and they also would host the dinners and lunches on campus. It's been very successful.

**NJC** You had really your own student restaurant, didn't you?

**AD** Right.

**NJC** Is that still going today?

**AD** Oh yeah.

**MD** The Artichoke Grill and the Oasis Dining Room.

**NJC** Are there other programs that you can think of?

**AD** We had a big ag program and mechanics, equine science, we had a horse program.

**NJC** Did you do any of that in conjunction with the reservation?

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**AD** No, not off the top of my head.

**NJC** After an incredible 30 years at Scottsdale Community College, you retired but were not forgotten. I understand that you were inducted in the first class of the Hall of Fame at Scottsdale Community College.

**MD** The Wall of Fame. And the athletic complex is named after him.

**MD** You were the first person.

**AD** I was the only person.

**MD** At that time.

**MD** At Xavier you got the Spirit Award and they named a foyer after you.

**AD** Yeah.

**NJC** We'll get to Xavier in a minute, but I wanted to ask you one more thing.

**AD** Okay.

**NJC** You have said that community is one of the most important purposes of Scottsdale Community College, and what did you mean exactly by that?

**AD** That's our name, Scottsdale Community College. And the emphasis is on community. And then the emphasis is how does a college individually and/or collectively work together to have that type of initiative known throughout campus? And if I have anything that's left, I would say, community is our middle name and we need to keep that in mind as we build programs.

**NJC** And to engage the rest of the community in what you're doing?

**AD** Yeah. And to work closely with the other colleges with some of these initiatives. And we have a support service, but we don't have our separate district office. The Maricopa College, job is to support and serve the colleges. And I was known to be aggressive in that area.

**MD** To deal with your community.

**AD** Yeah, and to work with the community. And the community's been supportive.

**NJC** Was that student driven or faculty driven?

**AD** Oh, cooperatively. Because it was a co-op thing. The Rotary had to be involved for support, encouragement and the students involved for a commitment to that initiative.

**NJC** To raise money?

**AD** To raise money.

**NJC** Did any of your students travel to Africa with Rotary?

**AD** Yes, a total group of about seven people with a faculty member traveled to see what was happening and the improvements made. And Rotary has really tried to eradicate polio in the world.

**NJC** And they were involved in the students raising money?

**AD** Right.

**NJC** It seems that the Rotary is the key to community involvement. You were first in Rotary 100? And then in Scottsdale?

**AD** Right.

**MD** No, you were always Scottsdale Rotary.

**AD** The 100 was the one I was involved in, transitioning from Illinois.

**NJC** And then from that into Scottsdale Rotary?

**AD** Right.

**NJC** Was this where you met so many of the Scottsdale leaders, the leaders of the community?

**AD** Right. It was a Rotary driven. I became active in any number of Rotary initiatives. And I was involved in raising money and involved in raising awareness. This magazine just came out yesterday from Rotary. It has a total huge synopsis of the efforts that Rotary has done in the last 20 years with eradicating polio.

**MD** They were his mentors.

**NJC** But for eradicating polio?



**AD** Right.

**NJC** Who are some of the people that you met in Rotary that sort of helped get you involved?

**AD** Don Chambers, Dave Hallstrom, John Schwantes.

**MD** Jim Bruner.

**AD** Jim Bruner, John Roth.

**NJC** Which of the Rotary projects were you most interested in?

**AD** Probably our student scholarship program. Rotary gives scholarships in six categories.

**NJC** Student scholarships?

**AD** We had a tremendous program in Rotary, and specifically at Scottsdale, to be involved in the community. And through the scholarship program we could do that. Last Wednesday was the first night we had to begin our preparation for scholarships at the end of the year. I was involved in student interviews and making sure that they were chosen. I have been able to shake hands with them as they went across the stage at graduation. I've shown Mary a couple of letters I've received. I'm still going through papers and reading the nice letters I received from students. It is very gratifying.

**NJC** There was also a scholarship program at Scottsdale Community College. I understand that upon your retirement the school set up a scholarship fund. Through generous donors the fund has grown to several hundred thousand in your name.

**MD** For your scholarship program at SCC over the years of his participation, on the 25-year anniversary, at his retirement, they built up a foundation in his name through generous donors and through people all over, like a couple hundred thousand in your name.

**AD** Yeah.

**MD** But from this endowment, at least seven, eight, or nine students write to him to tell him that they received their scholarships.

**NJC** That must be very exciting to receive those letters.

**AD** Oh yeah.

**NJC** And to know that these students have gone on to bigger and better things.

- NJC** I noticed you've been involved in a lot of boards in Scottsdale and Phoenix, even while you were president of SCC? How did you manage to do that? Did you get extra hours in your day?
- AD** Yeah, one year I was president of Rotary, president of the Chamber, Chairman of the Charros ... I lost a few pounds.
- NJC** Let's talk about some of those activities. Scottsdale Charros, you mentioned a scholarship, tell us about the Scottsdale Charros.
- AD** The Charros are known for their yearly trail ride which goes for three or four days. ...
- NJC** Did you go on those Charro rides?
- AD** I went 12 or 15, but you can go any time you want. It's expensive to go as an individual. It's about two thousand ... but you have to be asked.
- MD** You were the first Charro they had be a Charro who had never been on a ride. The first ride you went on they finally asked him to be a Charro, But, he had never gone on the ride to go through the process of, you know, whether they decided to blackball him or not. They finally said, "We just want him to be a Charro." And they named him a Charro. So, on his rookie ride, he was the host of one of the buses taking the riders on a ride even though he had never been on before.
- AD** But with the Charros, their work is with baseball primarily. They're looking at some other initiatives. We had people in from tennis. We had a big tennis tournament one time with John McEnroe and...
- MD** Up at the Princess when it was brand new.
- NJC** A tennis tournament?
- AD** A lot of activities from the Charros, but a lot of effort, too. We have up to 30 active members at any given time. But you are an active Charro for seven years.
- MD** And then you can be a lifer.
- AD** Right. And then we depend on those lifers. They don't have to work, but we need them to work. And those initiatives use the money that they earned from selling programs.
- NJC** At the baseball games?
- AD** Yeah.

**MD** And they used to do the horse show.

**AD** Yeah, we used to do the Arabian Horse show.

**MD** And that was fundraising to give scholarships.

**AD** Yeah, that's pass-through money; but there's no paid staff, so to speak, only the Executive Secretary.

**NJC** So there's a lot of volunteers.

**AD** Oh, a tremendous number.

**AD** We meet every third Thursday. The lifers can go to any of these. The Charros have made a commitment over the years to fund outstanding faculty, outstanding students and then outstanding administrators. Each year they give scholarships from each of the complexes. They also give awards to educators from elementary through high school and Scottsdale Community College.

**NJC** You helped the Charros and the Scottsdale Community College form a partnership, so to speak?

**AD** Yes. And they gave \$25,000 to the Foundation in recognition of my retirement.

**NJC** You were also involved in a leadership program in Scottsdale?

**AD** Yes.

**NC** What sort of a leadership program?

**AD** There is this leadership program that is fantastic. Gary Shapiro, Don Ruff, Sam Campana, and myself, put together a program for the leadership program and it's doing very well now

**NJC** So you're training leaders?

**AD** Right. This is the 32<sup>nd</sup> year.

**NJC** And then you had some involvement with the Scottsdale Memorial Hospital?

**AD** I was on the hospital board for nine years, and president for three. I was very involved with the hospital.

*Art DeCabooter Historymakers Oral History Transcript*

**NJC** Scottsdale Memorial Hospital. It was right downtown?

**AD** Yeah.

**NJC** When you got involved, was it a small hospital?

**AD** The operation on Shea was being built, but there was some cooperation with Mayo.

**MD** I was here when they negotiated with Mayo. They kept Art on the hospital board as president and did a lot of the negotiations with Mayo Hospital as they came in.

**AD** And now they plan another hospital in the northeast Valley.

**NJC** And I believe you were also one of the very early members of the Piper board?

**AD** There were four of us at the very beginning. It was probably the board members Jim Bruner, Paul Critchfield, Bob Williams, and Laura Grafton.

**MD** When Bob Williams passed away, they asked Art to be on the board. After a year, they made him the fourth lifetime trustee.

**NJC** Did you know Mrs. Piper before she passed away?

**AD** Yes. Occasionally she'd be involved in something with the Catholic Church that I would also be involved in, so we knew each other from that. And, we went to her home for dinner all the time. We knew her well. Her interests were the Catholic Church; medicine; senior, adult, and youth programs; and education. So, she had a legacy in about four areas.

**NJC** Then, as you mentioned before, you were very involved with Xavier College Prep. Were you involved in Xavier before your daughter went there? Or did you get involved in Xavier...

**AD** The first year that she was there, I got involved. Sister Joan, the principal, asked me to do some work as a board member.

**MD** Sister Joan is very persuasive, is she not?

**AD** Yes, that was thirty years ago.

**MD** 1986.

**NJC** Were you on the general Xavier board? Were you fundraising then or were there other boards for that?

*From Art DeCabooter 2018 Video Interview*

**AD** No, the Catholic Church incorporates all their parishes so that they're not eligible to be sued.

**NJC** So Xavier is part of the Diocese?

**AD** Yes, but I was on that board also and chaired that finance committee for 30 years.

**MD** You're still on that board. And the finance committee. He showed them how to do a self-evaluation. He got them ready for accreditation. And they became a Blue-Ribbon School. Sister Joan, who's very astute, hung onto him. Art kind of moved up and became part of the National Catholic Education Association and became part of Piper. Sister Joan has kept her arm on him. He was extremely helpful to her and it's been a mutual...

**AD** Yeah, she's phenomenal.

**MD** He was the first foundation chair when they started going into fundraising.

**AD** Oh her title has changed. She is president of Xavier, and Sister Joanie is the principal. Sister Joan is very aggressive, but in a pleasant way, in addressing some of the finance issues that we have.

**NJC** She certainly has left her imprint on the school.  
What other Catholic education organizations have you been involved in?

**AD** Well, I was on the local board, then the regional board and then I was on the national board for Catholic education...

**NC** Is that for Catholic education K-12 or just for...

**MD** No, it's preschool through the seminary.

**AD** Yeah.

**NJC** Preschool through seminary?

**AD** Yes.

**MD** He was asked to be on the Xavier board and then from Xavier board, he was on the Diocesan school board. And then after that board, someone nominated him as one of eight representatives on the Board of boards. And then through that, when he was president of that, he was then on the big National Catholic Education Association Board. He used to stay in a former convent in Washington, DC when they'd go for meetings. There were bars on the windows. They stayed in this little retreat place and somebody would cook their meals and they had one telephone that he

could call out on. Then when he was on the big board, he said, "I could like this." He stayed in Georgetown in a nice little hotel. Somebody picked him up at the airport. And it seems that after he was part of that board that year, they went, "Ooh, he's quiet," but they decided to keep him on.

**NJC** So all those years at St. Gregory really primed you for a life of working and giving.

**AD** Yeah, yeah, that's a good point.

**NJC** National Education.

**AD** Let me tell you about the National Board.

**NJC** Absolutely.

**AD** I was the vice chair, because to be the chair you had to be a bishop...or higher. But then I would end up chairing the committee because the bishops, I seem to remember, would be called to Rome, or all sorts of things, and when they were gone, the next person in line was myself, as the vice chair.

**NJC** So even though you weren't bishop, you were...

**MD** Art thinks he's a vice cardinal.

**AD** They never told me different.

**NC** Do you have a red robe?

**AD** No, but I can steal one.

**MD** And when I met Art, I was reading the book, "The Cardinal." And I asked him if he had any aspirations. And he said, "No, but I'm destined."

**AD** That was my humility coming out.

**NJC** If your path had changed at St. Gregory's, you might be a cardinal today.

**AD** Yeah.

**MD** He had already decided to step down from the monastery because he felt he could do more for the church outside of the monastery and he proved his point ...

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**NJC** That he could do more?

**MD** ... he could do more for the church outside of the monastery.

**NJC** And I think you certainly did prove your point. The last activity I want to talk to you about is the McDowell Sonora Mountain Preserve. You were instrumental in that from the very beginning, were you not?

**AD** It was a couple years after we moved here that I chaired the City of Scottsdale Visioning Effort.

**MD** No, late 80s probably. You came in the late 70s. Carla came to you when you were going to talk about the McDowell's. You had been on another committee, and people saw that you were good at running meetings and asked a favor of you.

**NJC** Was there any preserve at the time when you started in your activities? Had any of the mountains been preserved there in the McDowell's?

**AD** No.

**MD** It started with Carla coming to Art to say they had already been working hard to do some preserving.

**NJC** And Carla is?

**MD** Carla (uses no last name) is very active; she's probably the most active. She was the real trigger to get this going.

**NJC** So they wanted you to head up the committee?

**AD** The facilitator.

**MD** They said he would be acknowledged whereas other people thought they were tree huggers. And were trying to submarine that effort. If he would please give them his backing.

**NJC** But back before the thought of the Discovery Center, when you wanted to talk about the mountain preserves. Was that going to require money? Fundraising?

**AD** Oh yeah. And Bob Cafarella was the main person from the City who helped with that initiative. But six different times we've gone to the citizens of Scottsdale. Will you fund this? Will you adopt this? And all of them relating to movement of the preserve.

\*\*\*SEE ADDENDUM FOR DETAILS OF THESE ELECTIONS

*From Art DeCaboooter 2018 Video Interview*

**NJC** To bettering the preserve?

**AD** Yeah. And it would be to have an initiative to raise funds for upkeep of the peripheral area, but not moving into the preserve itself. We had people that dedicated hours upon hours. Carla is one, but there were so many others over the years that really contributed to the preserve and that will hopefully pass the election.

**NJC** So you had purchased this land...

**AD** Oh yeah, we had passed through the commission, an effort to purchase part of the preserve. I'd have to look at my figures, but I think it's probably 30,000 acres.

**NJC** Was part of it privately owned?

**AD** Yes, the Toll Brothers owned some and there was a mishmash of different people involved. But they were very cooperative in helping us. And they would identify parcels of land or identify areas where funding needed to be supported just because of the location of hikers, parking, and things like that. So, we would raise bond money initiatives with, specific collective efforts. There were six of those over the years. We have money in the bank now, that we could finish off that process, I believe. But we need to wait to see how the election goes.

**NJC** So now this land is preserved. There's no commercial activity on it.

**AD** No, no.

**NJC** So the idea was preserving it in its natural state?

**AD** Right.

**NJC** You must feel very proud of that accomplishment?

**AD** If we can make it happen.

**NJC** Do you feel like it's finished?

**AD** This election will give us some initiative that we have to finish the situation.

**NJC** When you started this as being the voice of this committee, was there a lot of opposition to preserving the mountain?

**AD** No, there was not - there was no opposition; it was how do we move this forward without being



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involved with some cantankerous effort. We were coming up on an election in November, in which people who are not pleased where this Desert Center had gotten together ...

**NJC** To make it even larger?

**MD** No, it'll stay the same.

**AD** Oh, it stays the same.

**NJC** Well, it must make you feel good to have chaired this and to see it go from nothing to ...

**AD** Yeah,

**NJC** Whatever, it's very big.

**AD** Yeah.

**NJC** Are there any other activities that you were involved in that you'd like to talk about?

**AD** Oh, yeah. I coached soccer for children for 16 ...

**NJC** You coached soccer?

**MD** For 16 years.

**AD** Sixteen.

**NJC** You coached girls' soccer. Did your daughter play soccer?

**AD** That's why I was coaching. She was on my team.

**MD** Both daughters. He started when they needed coaches, and he didn't have anything else to do so he coached that ...

**NJC** Yeah, I can see you didn't have anything else to do. How did you manage to squeeze coaching soccer in?

**AD** Because we'd practice every Wednesday and have a game every Saturday.

**MD** He's just very, very organized. And they went on trips. and did a lot of things. It was a wonderful experience.

*From Art DeCabooter 2018 Video Interview*

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**AD** Oh yes, as a Piper Life Trustee.

**MD** When he came home, he told me that this is the best job he could ever have outside the college where you couldn't believe they paid you to work there. You said, "I give out all this money to people with great need. And it doesn't come out of my pocket. I make all these people feel good."

**NJC** That's wonderful to be part of something like that. Where you can see the need in the community, and ...

**AD** And do something about it.

**NJC** Because most - all the Piper money stays in Arizona.

**AD** Yes. And for the most part it stays in Maricopa County.

**NJC** In Maricopa County?

**MD** Except for grants done by trustees who can give to something they choose.

**NJC** They can give it to outside ...

**MD** Like he - to St Gregory's, but they all have to be approved by other trustees.

**NJC** So I can imagine you enjoy that very much.

**AD** Yeah, that is a tough job.  
I'm trying to think if there's anything else. I appreciate the time you given us.

**NJC** Well, over a life that's been so busy, it's hard to remember everything that you've done, I'm sure. What do you think's been the proudest accomplishment that you've done?

**AD** Well, it will be the Preserve.

**NJC** Building the Preserve?

**AD** Yeah.

**NJC** And why would you say that?

**AD** Because it'll last forever.

*Art DeCabooter Historymakers Oral History Transcript*

**NJC** Besides your parents, can you mention one or two people that influenced your life? Besides of course, Mary.

**AD** Oh yeah. I would say Abbot - the Abbot at St. Gregory's.

**MD** Abbot Philip Bernie.

**NJC** He was there when you were in school and when you came back as an administrator?

**MD** He stepped down when Art left.

**NJC** When you left, he stepped down because he couldn't manage without you?

**MD** Art was his golden-haired boy. You always talked about Dr. Eberly, John Roth—they are people who really...

**AD** Yeah, locally Jim Bruner.

**NJC** Locally?

**AD** John Roth and David Hallstrom have been very influential in my life. And the other would be Dr. Eberley.

**NJC** How important has your family been to your success?

**AD** Oh, not much.

**MD** Which is true.

**AD** They been a tremendous ally, support, and they've been ...

**NJC** Did they have options?

**AD** No. But they were absolutely critical. I mean, the things that I take on, the laity things, are not for them, but in a way, it is for them.

**NJC** Well certainly because they're here.

**AD** Yeah.

**NJC** How have you seen Scottsdale grow over the time that you've been here? What kind of areas has Scottsdale grown in?

*From Art DeCabooter 2018 Video Interview*

*Art DeCabooter Historymakers Oral History Transcript*

**AD** I think there's real effort, the convention tourism with Rachel Sacco, and that whole operation is excellent.

**NJC** In tourism convention?

**AD** Yeah, convention, I said, but the hospitality industry has been tremendous. But also, economic development. Two weeks ago, at Rotary Club, the fella from Paradise Valley who is very knowledgeable in economic development gave an overview of what's coming for Scottsdale and it's almost scary what they're projecting. And you see that time and again, as these high rises go up all over Scottsdale.

**NJC** Well, Scottsdale really can't grow anymore land wise because they are bound on all sides.

**AD** Oh yeah.

**NJC** What would you say you'd like to have your legacy be in the in Scottsdale? Or in Arizona?

**AD** That I was active in this community, especially as I said, on the Preserve.

**MD** Mr. Scottsdale.

**AD** Mr. Scottsdale.

**NJC** Yes, I can say you were active. What would you like to say to the people in your leadership area about what they should be doing?

**AD** They should think of others, they should plan for the future, they should enhance and enable community service, community efforts, and they should be committed to Scottsdale.

**NJC** Committed to Scottsdale. Which one can certainly say about you, that you've been committed to Scottsdale. Thank you very much.

**AD** Thank you. I appreciate you.

End of Interview

ADDENDUM

Scottsdale's Election History concerning the Mountain Preserve all of which passed.

May 23, 1945:

*From Art DeCabooter 2018 Video Interview*

*Art DeCaboooter Historymakers Oral History Transcript*

PROP 400... increase the rate of the (sales) taxes by 0.20% for a period of 30 years, or less, to provide funds to ... acquire land for the McDowell Mountain Preserve...

September 10, 1996:

PROP 404 ... authorized to issue bonds to acquire land ... repaid with the proceeds of the 0.20% tax...

November 3, 1998

PROP 410 ... limiting the disposition of Preserve Lands

PROP 411... allowing used of preserve taxes to acquire preserve within the boundary

September 7, 1999:

Question 1... authorizing the sale of up to \$200 million of General Obligation bonds to provide funds to acquire preserve land (debt service on such bonds to be paid from preserve sales tax collections.)

May 18, 2004:

Question 1... authorized to impose and collect a 0.15% special (sales) tax for a period of 30 years for the general purposes of acquiring land and constructing improvement thereto, for the McDowell Sonoran Preserve and paying related financing costs and fees in connection therewith...

Question 2 ... authorizing the sale of up to \$500 million of General Obligation bonds to provide funds to acquire preserve land and construct improvements thereto ... (debt service on such bonds to be paid from preserve sales tax collections.)

November 6, 2018

PROP 420 ... amending the Charter to prohibit the alteration of the natural state of and limit the use of preserve funds for any purpose other than those outlined in the proposed Charter amendment...

*From Art DeCaboooter 2018 Video Interview*